

# Succession Planning Half of Caltrans Could Retire Tomorrow

Caltrans has about 20,000 employees, most of which are full-time employees, and 10,301—more than half of them—are eligible to retire. If multiplied by 16 years (the average length of state service for Caltrans workers) more than 160,000 years of experience could disappear with them. As part of its move to become a more efficient and modern transportation agency, Caltrans created the Office of Enterprise Risk Management to provide various strategic business tools to Caltrans, including a strategic approach to workforce and succession planning.

Succession planning and knowledge transfer are priorities in the Office of Enterprise Risk Management because, as the graph shows, about half of Caltrans' employees are eligible to retire.

## Planning for the Future

Caltrans employees fall into five major program areas, with approximately 400 classifications and 12 bargaining units. Their years of experience are nearly as valuable as the employees themselves, and lessening the effects of their loss is the crux of the Office of Enterprise Risk Management's Workforce Planning Unit. With such a large, diverse, and multidimensional labor pool, workforce planning identifies human resource requirements and develops strategies to meet those needs, and in turn, ensures that Caltrans' strategic plan goals can be achieved.

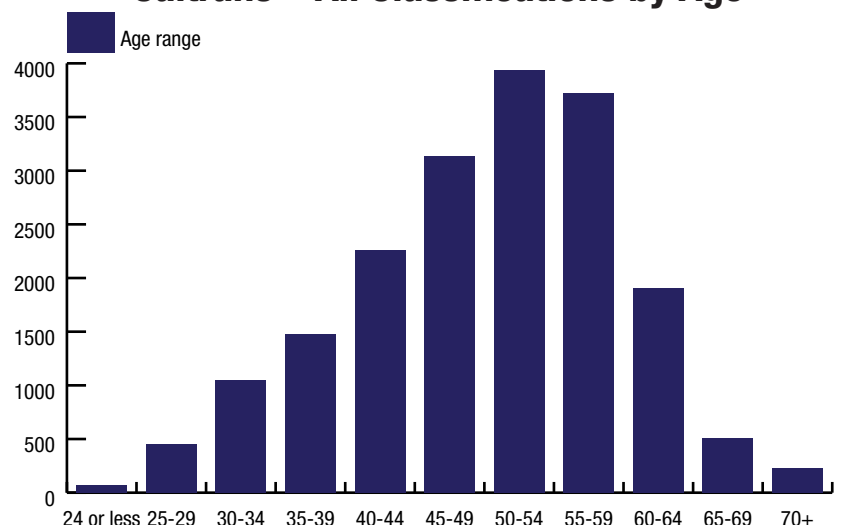
Workforce planning means having the right number of people, with the right skills, working in the right jobs at the right time. Succession planning is an important subset of workforce planning that focuses on having the right leadership in place at every level of the organization.

### *Workforce planning:*

- Provides strategies and tools to analyze current workforce composition.
- Enables proactive planning to address changes in future workforce requirements.
- Highlights the critical need for strategies to transfer knowledge—before that knowledge is lost to employee retirements.
- Encourages early and continuous development of existing and newly hired staff.
- Ensures that recruitment resources are used more efficiently.
- Emphasizes adopting employee retention and workplace of choice policies.

Workforce planning develops Caltrans' most valuable resource—its employees. It identifies emerging risks and finds solutions, continually refining practices and processes. Doing so secures a properly trained and efficient workforce into perpetuity and aligns with Caltrans' mission, vision, goals, and values. Workforce planning contributes to the department's performance and provides management with a way to align the workforce with a business plan, anticipate changes, and address current and future workforce issues.

### Caltrans – All Classifications by Age



## Challenges

Despite Caltrans progressive efforts with workforce and succession planning, challenges remain. One of the reasons the department is able to accomplish its worthwhile public projects efficiently may also limit it in achieving workforce-planning solutions—namely, its size. Although its workforce population has been declining in the last few years, Caltrans is still the nation's largest transportation department, with approximately 20,000 full- and part-time employees. Of those 20,000, about one third are engineers, another third maintenance employees, and the remaining third a blend of administrative and transportation professionals, clerical, and skilled trades classifications. Caltrans' priority has historically been and continues to be delivering projects as efficiently as possible. With its new strategic plan, Caltrans endeavors to make it possible for supervisors to balance operational needs with workforce planning.

The civil service classification and hiring system ensures merit and excellence in employment, but it presents challenges to finding workforce-planning solutions. Caltrans uses at least 400 of the roughly 4,000 established statewide classifications. While the California Department of Human Resources has made strides toward consolidating classifications, the efforts have been incremental. Specifications for many job classifications are outdated, making it difficult to hire the right person for the right job. Furthermore, the application and examination processes are detailed and can be difficult for the average person to understand.

Employee transfer data from external departments plays a significant part in workforce planning efforts. Without access to statewide employee movement data, it is challenging for workforce planning staff and line supervisors to track employee movement between state agencies. This delays the workforce planning processes

and forces managers to make evaluations based on retirement and resignation data, without including transfer information. Caltrans has been working with the California Department of Human Resources to develop a way to track intrastate employee transfers.

A recent audit by the California State Auditor tasked Caltrans with improving certain areas of workforce and succession planning to ensure our current and future leadership remains healthy and sustainable.

The State Auditor's comments focus on four main areas of change:

- Creating a single, unified workforce plan, updated annually.
- Developing quantifiable measurements to track progress and performance.
- Creating processes that evaluate the effectiveness of workforce planning processes.
- Designating a single point to monitor pertinent workforce planning trends and with the authority to apply solutions in each program area.

These challenges are also opportunities for Caltrans to improve and propel into a successful and prosperous future.

## The Future

Caltrans' Office of Enterprise Risk Management, Workforce Planning Unit, held its first Workforce Planning Quarterly Forum in January 2015. Functioning in part as an in-house round table, the forums focus on different divisions and programs coming together to discuss all aspects of workforce planning that have become a



## Caltrans Knowledge Transfer Foundational Building Blocks



pressing issue in their respective areas. Bringing different programs together creates a cohesive culture as the forums help employees see things from other perspectives and relate their role and contribution to Caltrans' mission and vision. Participants share past successes, future goals, and potential solutions from approaching challenges, as each of Caltrans' programs are uniquely different but share many similarities.

In addition to the State Auditor's suggestions, the Workforce Planning Unit instituted its own performance measures to track progress and refine the workforce planning process, including updating all workforce plans, engaging all occupational groups, and producing at least one new workforce plan solution per occupational

group. The [Knowledge Transfer Guidebook](#) is also being updated. This user-friendly and critical tool offers helpful and practical tips on knowledge transfer techniques for supervisor and employee alike, helping each stay connected and cross-trained.

Organizational Excellence, Goal 5 of the [Caltrans Strategic Management Plan](#), aims to develop and cultivate the premiere transportation workforce in the country. The Workforce Planning Office is helping Caltrans achieve this goal. Asking employees to share their thoughts and opinions is a critical step in organizational excellence. In May 2015, the department conducted a survey in support of the Organizational Excellence goal. The survey included several questions to gauge employee awareness of and involvement with workforce and succession planning, career development, training courses, and knowledge transfer. Caltrans is analyzing the survey results and will use the information to address the State Auditor's comments, incorporate best practices, and form a baseline from which to measure its work-force planning progress.

Caltrans leadership has been engaging in multiple national transportation organizations, bringing exposure and collaboration to the necessity of workforce planning by participating in a Transportation Research Board Task Force for Knowledge Management, serving on a National Cooperative Highway Research Plan (NCHRP) panel to create a Knowledge Management "primer" for state departments of transportation. Caltrans also recently completed its part in national survey for the NCHRP that focused on all levels of knowledge transfer and management within several state departments of transportation, allowing the organization to recognize trends and patterns, forecast strengths and weaknesses, and continue to refine knowledge transfer best practices.

In spearheading the knowledge transfer movement at Caltrans, employees are able to share their skills and their insight from their current position through the department's employee intranet, as well as through direct interaction in their work unit. Sharing institutional expertise is one of the most effective ways to engage in knowledge transfer.

Caltrans is working to ensure knowledge from experienced employees who may soon retire is transferred to the employees who will be the department's future.

Source: Office of Enterprise Risk Management